CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH : A BRIEF STATEMENT
Adult education, being one of the basic components of the National System of Education attracts the attention of planners, administrators, educationists and researchers of our nation who are constantly wedded to their up-hill task of eliminating the evil of illiteracy from our country. New-e-days planning in the field of adult education is given prior importance and the same is expected to be on the right note so as to remove the scourage of mass illiteracy from the body of India. Plans may materialise and may be implemented to eradicate the evil from the grass-root level by voluntary agencies and educationists with avowed interest, but these efforts will bear no fruit, if the planning lacks in empirical evidence collected by researchers made in the field of adult education. Mere theoretical knowledge will not have a say in the field of planning and they tend to end up in futile attempts producing no significant result. To have the planning and execution successful at the national level, researches are to be made from problems and practical curriculum to effective training and retraining staff resources. If they are done systematically and scientifically, the adult education programme will no doubt get maximum support and will yield the required result.

Unfortunately, most of the researches done on adult education, fail to probe deep into the intricate problems related to this field and their possible solutions. Only a few of these studies meet the rules and
regulation governing a genuine research. It is not fair to say that these surface-level and inadequate researches have no value in the field of adult education. As most of the studies are concerned with the basic and the fundamental aspects like the descriptions of the aims, methods, problems, structure, history and development of adult education in our country, they serve as a solid and sound foundation on which complicated and more descriptive research can be taken up.¹

At present research in the field of adult education has become a pressing necessity and never before did we need it as much as we do now. We are on the verge of producing exciting developments in the field of adult education in India. Everywhere new institutions spring up and the adult education movement is gaining arrested momentum. In this context, the importance of useful researches in the field of adult education is to be remembered and to be sought-after. It will make us realise the situation and with the knowledge we can develop the right kind of adult education to meet the demands of the day.

It is to be remembered that scientific and systematic research in adult education should be encouraged to meet the pressing demands of our time. Any scientific and systematic research depends on proper methodological approach. It is to say that without proper methodology, we will never reach the goal of research. However, it is to

be pointed out that research is not a methodology as some may tend to assume. It is a planned way of collecting and digesting facts to enrich the coffers of our mind. Any research has a goal ahead, a definite question to be answered and from this research question follows an appropriate methodology. Many researches which take the opposite course of this sequence end up in inappropriate attempts to quantify human experience. Yet, there is a difference between the methodologist whose research is confined to a particular field of research which does not cover a vast field of human experience and the methodologist whose work is dictated by the intent of the research. This alternative approach is of immense value to the researcher in adult education, whose work and field demand many alternatives to bring about success in the implementation of adult education.

To foster the growth of better methodological approach, two recent and popular areas of research in adult education can be mentioned. The first is the qualitative approach which includes an heuristic approach to research which is a method of solving problems by inductive reasoning, by evaluating past experience and moving by trial and error to a solution. The second one is participatory evaluation and participatory research. A chosen community of population covers the entire research project right from the formation of the problem to discussion on how to seek solutions and interpretation of the findings. While taking up the goal of research as change, it is indispensable that the research team should have representatives who are closely connected with all the
elements in the situation that have a bearing on the change. It is to say that the process of research should be seen as a total experience which caters to the needs of the community and to increase awareness and commitment within the community. Research in adult education in this way should try to reply upon fresh initiative and innovations employing different approaches to solve the existing problems and to create better awareness among the society without giving up the basic principles and philosophies of adult education. 2

In the present study, care has been taken to maintain such principles which have already been mentioned. The present study deals with the socio-economic problems in the implementation of the adult education programmes in Assam. To make the study scientific and practically feasible, it is of utmost importance to follow a proper methodology. The methodology which is taken up for research is better known as methodological approach and let us analyse in brief what methodological approaches have been followed to make the study a success.

**Need of the study:**

Keeping in view the vital importance of adult education which helps an illiterate adult to insinuate an awareness to develop their literacy, skills and efficiency and to keep them in touch with the important happenings around them and to give proper expression to their creativity, several

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programmes were introduced in Assam to educate adults which produced no concrete and favourable result.

Assam, though it has become smaller after re-organisation of the States, still it is large enough having sixteen plain districts and two hill districts. It is a pity that the percentage of literacy in Assam is a mere 29.14 per cent (hills 20.5 per cent and plains 38.4 per cent) as against the rate of 39.5 per cent of India as a whole as recorded by the Census of 1971. Out of the total eighteen districts, Absagar, a plain district is comparatively more literate. The total percentage of literacy in Absagar is 36.6 per cent (male being 45 per cent and female 27.2 per cent). The glaring high rate of literacy can be attributed to the pioneering educational activities of the Christian missionaries in that district, way back in 1826. It is obviously their efforts which have brought about this happy phenomenon. Contrarily, Karbi Anglong a hill district is notoriously placed at the bottom in literacy rate having a literate population of 19.3 per cent—27.6 per cent male and 9.6 per cent female. This is due to the fact that it is still backward. There is poor communication system and this makes the remote region inaccessible. The scourge of poverty, ignorance, conservative traditional living aid fuel to the fire along with possible diverse prejudices against formal education. Another saddening factor is that there are 2382 villages in the plains and 733 villages in the hill districts without a single school and this greatly affects the growth of education in Assam. The facts presented
above will give an idea of the extent of prevailing illiteracy in the State.

On the heels of the implementation of the National Adult Education Programme, the Government of Assam too shared the initiative by preparing a Draft Adult Education Plan for both plain and hill areas with the oblate view of eradicating illiteracy in the age-group of 15-35. But so far no fruitful result has been achieved in the implementation of adult education programme due to some socio-economic problems. Under the above circumstances, it is of prior concern in this context to find out such socio-economic problems and to suggest measures for the same. It can be achieved only through a scientific and systematic study based on proper methodology.

**Objectives of the study:**

Keeping the above mentioned facts in view, the study has been conducted with the following objectives:

1. to find out the socio-economic problems that stand in the way of implementing the adult education programme in Assam, specially two sections of population -

   (a) those who can afford economically but are not willing to have adult education - specially the tea-garden labourers; and

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3. Debi, R., 'National Adult Education Programme in Assam', Published in the Indian Journal of Adult Education, Vol. 40, No. 4, April, 1979, pp. 11-12
(b) those who cannot afford to have adult education without economic
benefit;

(ii) to study the socio-economic status of the illiterate adults of
Assam;

(iii) to study the educational needs of the illiterate adults of
Assam;

(iv) to study the instructional strategies of the adult education
programmes in Assam;

(v) to know the selection of learning activities for the adult
learners of Assam;

(vi) to suggest measures to gear up the speedy expansion of the
adult education programmes in Assam; and

(vii) to suggest appropriate action, if any, in respect of planning
and execution of the adult education programme based on the findings.

Hypothesis:

With the above objectives in mind, the hypothesis of the present
work has been framed in the following way:

(1) There are numerous socio-economic problems in Assam which stand
in the way of implementing the adult education programme.

(2) Over the years it has been observed that due to some socio-
economic problems, several schemes of adult education programme of the
State have failed.
(3) The socio-economic status of the illiterate adults in Assam is very poor and they are far away from the socio-economic mainstream of the State.

(4) The adult education programme is basically a rural education programme, the success of which mainly depends on motivating an economically hard-pressed people for some form of education or as the expression goes for functional literacy.

(5) A broad study of socio-economic problems among the following two sections of population is obviously essential:

(a) those who can afford economically but are not willing to have adult education—specially the tea-garden labourers; and

(b) those who cannot afford to have adult education without economic benefit.

(6) The tea-garden labourers and the people alike are generally averse to learning, though they are not as much economically hard-pressed.

(7) Generally, the tea-garden labourers and the people alike derive pleasure from cheap merrymaking, gambling and drinking and naturally they do not find it interesting to spend their leisure in adult education centres.

(8) Some people belonging to the poor income group who are to keep themselves engaged in some profit-gaining work in their leisure, can not think of spending that time for the purpose of having education at the adult education centres without any economic benefit.
There are also people below the poverty line who are always so much obsessed with their worries and problems that despite their willingness, they can hardly pay due attention to the adult education programmes.

There are some defects in the instructional strategies and selection of learning activities of the adult education programmes.

The training of adult education functionaries is neither adequate nor their economic status is improved and as a result they are frustrated, disappointed and dejected.

So, it is the need of the hour to find out the socio-economic problems that stand in the way of implementing the adult education programmes in Assam and to suggest measures to gear up the speedy expansion of it.

Selection of area:

Area has a major role in a research study. In order to come out with a finding through a research study, the researchers' attention should be confined to a chosen area of work. A proposed research may cover a wide range of interest but it is humanly impossible to cover such a wide area without getting the effort dissipated. Survey work or the maintenance of any other procedure will help a little in achieving the specific goal, if the area is wide and beyond compact analysis. So, it is advisable to complete the work when it covers a wide range through an intensive study with some specific areas. The present work has singled out some specific areas selected at random on the basis of the following facts.
It is a clarified fact that the percentage of literacy in Assam is very low. Right from Sadia to Dibrugarh the extreme eastern and western parts of Assam respectively, illiterates abound who belong to different castes, tribes, communities and religions. The groaning illiterate populace due to their lack of general awareness find it very difficult to better their ways of living. Most of them have agriculture, fishing, tea-garden work, handicraft and small business as their livelihood which never elevate them to higher levels save a handful of people who have been fortunate enough to become economically sound.

It is not necessary in this context to repeat the fact that several programmes have been taken up in Assam in order to eradicate the existing illiteracy in the State which turned futile due to the prevalence of some socio-economic problems among the society. As a result of these futile attempts, the rate of illiteracy in Assam is growing day by day. There are two types of adult illiterates in Assam. There are some illiterates who are financially sound but do not have the awareness to take up adult education. The rest have the desire to be educated but will not do so without getting some kind of economic benefit. As for instance, the tea-garden labourers and the people alike most of whom are economically not hard-pressed are passive in participating in the adult education programmes. On the other hand, rickshaw pullers, domestic servants, daily wage labourers and small businessmen who have a hand-to-mouth existence never think of participating in the adult education programmes without economic benefit.
Such type of adult illiterates as mentioned above are found in almost all parts of Assam having similar problems and it is obvious that the obstacle in the field of adult education in Assam is the prevailing socio-economic disparity. So, it is the need of the hour to do away with the main socio-economic disparities in Assam which hinder the growth of adult education in the State. Measures are to be taken to suggest ways and means to gear up the speedy expansion of the programme. To achieve it, it is necessary to select some specific areas of Assam and an intensive study is to be undertaken within the specific areas to find out suitable answers to the existing problems which are similar in the field of adult education in Assam. For instance, Sibsagar, a plain district of Assam, though it has a high literacy rate comprises many tea-gardens where most of the labourers are illiterate. Likewise, there are many such tea-gardens and villages spread throughout Assam where the prevalence of similar socio-economic problems stunt the growth and popularity of adult education. As the problems are very similar in almost all parts of Assam, it will be the easiest way to have a clear picture of Assam in the present sphere of work through an intensive study with some selected specific areas and in this context it is of our prime concern to single out the specific areas to analyse and solve the present problems with the help of proper research methodology. With this end in view, one hundred adult education centres of the following areas namely, Makipar Tea Estate, Hatipati Tea Estate and Balustung Tea Estate of Sibsagar district, Fatemabad Tea Estate and some villages of Bajali Development Block under Barpeta
district, some agencies who are running adult education centres like one voluntary organisation of Barpeta Road, B.E.B. College of Sarupeta, both of them under the district of Barpeta and one unit of Nehru Yubak Kendra of Cauhati under the district of Laxkip where the adult learners belong to various castes and communities having different ways of living have been selected at random for intensive study of the present work.

Tool used:

For each and every type of research we need certain instruments to gather new facts or to explore new fields. The instruments thus employed as means are called tools. The selection of suitable instruments or tools is of vital importance for successful research. Different tools are suitable for collecting various kinds of information for various purposes. The researcher may use one or more of the tools in combination for his purpose. In the light of the facts mentioned here, the following tools have been employed for the present study to find out the required facts:

(a) Questionnaire:

In general the word questionnaire refers to a device for securing answers to questions by using a form which the respondent fills in himself. The seeming ease with which it is planned and executed may be appealing to a novice in research. Questionnaire, popularly known as 'the lazy man's


way of gaining information, is one of the most flexible of tools which
has obviously an upper hand over other kinds of tools in collecting both
quantitative and qualitative information.

As questionnaire is an indispensable and an easy tool in collecting
the required information, a questionnaire for the present study has been
prepared to collect the required information from the instructors of some
selected adult education centres. The questions in the questionnaire have
been specially set to probe deep into the socio-economic problems which
deter the growth of adult education programmes. The questions are simple
and most of them are related to the day-to-day experiences of the instruc-
tors who are the sole field workers and who are in constant touch with
the illiterate mass.

(b) Interview schedule:

Interview schedule in a way is an oral type of questionnaire. It
is also an equally important research tool whereby the subject provides
the researcher with the necessary information in a face to face relation-
ship. "The dynamics of interviewing, however, involve much more than an
oral questionnaire." It is a simple process of communication or inter-
action between the interviewer and the subject. An interview will yield
better result if a proper motivation is induced by the interviewer. The

6. Good, Jeter V., : Introduction to Educational Research, Appleton
Century Crofts, Inc., New York, 1959, p. 207
psychological climate of the interview has a say in extracting the necessary information. It is relatively more flexible a tool and can be modified at any moment according to the situation unlike in the case of questionnaire where every detail is to be planned before it is executed.

An interview schedule has also been prepared for the present study to interview the adult learners thereby getting the proper information regarding the socio-economic problems which stand in the way of implementing adult education programmes in Assam. The interview schedule has some ready made questions which are flexible enough to be modified according to the situation and to get information regarding the problem in hand. It has been prepared in Assamese, the regional language of Assam and the subjects have been contacted personally to have a face-to-face relationship at the time of the interview. It has yielded the required result by bringing into light the difficulties which hinder them from having adult education.

(c) Observation:

Observation as a tool of research deals with the external behaviour of persons in appropriate situations controlled or uncontrolled. It is concerned, as a rule, with neither what a respondent places on paper, nor with what he says in an interview. It is not haphazard or unplanned. As a research technique, it must always be expert, purpose, systematic, carefully focussed and thoroughly recorded. It should be accurate, valid and
Considering the importance of observation as a necessary tool of research, some adult education centres have been singled out to fathom into the socio-economic problems that mar the materialization of the adult education programme in Assam. As the adult education centres rely on the adult learners and the instructors, the observations which have been made in the centres are mainly concerned about those which turn on successful completion have been carefully and systematically documented.

**Sampling design:**

During recent years sampling has been increasingly used in education to ascertain information necessary in answering certain questions about a specific population. In the opinion of Henry E. Garrett, "Various techniques have been devised for obtaining a sample which will be representative of its population. The adequacy of a sample (i.e., its lack of bias) will depend upon our knowledge of the population or supply" as well as upon the method used in drawing the sample.  

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* A supply usually means a population of objects or things.

In any investigation of this type, an unselected random sample gives reliable results. When a selection is made on some criterion or the other, the sample will be biased and as such, the results or conclusions of the investigation will not be accepted as applicable to the whole field. 9

To select the sample for the study, a simple random sampling design has been adopted. The questionnaire to be used among the instructors of the selected one hundred adult education centres of the specific areas as has been mentioned earlier, has been executed with great success and the one hundred centres selected at random have also been clearly and personally observed.

For interview, the adult learners have been selected at random three from each selected one hundred adult education centres and so far, the total number of adult learners who have been successfully interviewed has come around three hundred.

Survey work:

Generally we are dependant on the documents of the Education Department of the Government and other published works to have the informations regarding the implementation of the Adult Education Programme. But in most cases, these informations are biased, second hand or not accurate. So,

these materials cannot be treated as correct source. Thus an incorrect source leads to a painful conclusion. To have a right conclusion, we must have first hand informations and that can be done by personal contact with the people engaged in the programme. Evidently, it is the survey work through which we can collect doubtlessly proper informations and as a research method, survey work has an important role in any research.

Accordingly, an extensive survey work covering all the elements in the programme has been undertaken with the help of the necessary tools at the chosen one hundred adult education centres within the specific areas as mentioned earlier. Added to that, three hundred adult learners three from each centre and one hundred instructors have been surveyed with the ready use of the research tools to extract some minute lines regarding the present work. Though it is not proper to claim that the one hundred instructors, three hundred adult learners and one hundred adult education centres surveyed represent the scene and the state of adult education programme throughout the State of Assam; yet it will nevertheless help us to survive a real picture of the state of affairs of adult education programme in the whole state as well as the prevalence of socio-economic problems which stand in the way of implementing adult education programme in Assam.
Collection of data:

Great care has been taken to collect the data individually from the adult education centres, instructors and adult learners through interview schedule, questionnaire and observation after taking every reasonable precaution to ensure normal conditions. Further, some materials have also been collected through published works, journals, reports and documents of the Education Department of the Government.

Treatment of data:

Both qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies have their equal place in adult education research. The case being so, in order to analyse the collected data, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have strictly been adhered to.

(i) **Qualitative approach**:

Qualitative approach embraces a sequence of observations in which each observation belongs to one of several mutually exclusive classes which are non-numerical. But here exist many aspects which cannot be analysed in numerical terms. In cases like that, qualitative approach has been adopted and as a result a good number of analysis of the present work comes under qualitative approach.

(ii) **Quantitative approach**: 

It is a set of numerical observations obtained as a result of counting or measuring some characteristics. The present work includes many numerical datum. In such cases, quantitative approach has been adhered to through frequencies, percentages, graphical representation and tabulation.

The foregoing pages have drawn a brief sketch of the systematic completion of the present work in hand. In this chapter, sincere efforts have been made to forward a discussion on the lines of which this work has been completed. That is to say, what methodological approaches have been relied upon have been systematically placed. On that grounds special emphasis has been given in this chapter to highlight the uses of tools and techniques that have been emply made use of. It has already been mentioned that by using the necessary tools and techniques several datum have been collected to complete the purpose of the study. Had it not been so, the study would have been inconceivable and incomplete. But the collected datum, major findings and results have not been analysed here. The succeeding chapters will give ample room for such discussions in a systematic and scientific way.